

Fond memories of 41 years in Kresge stores

"I'm trying not to think of it," says Ruth Like. She was talking about August 31, 1983 the day she was slated to retire from Kresge 150, Portsmouth, Ohio. That day was also her 70th birthday. She explained that 70 is the retirement age with the company. October would have marked her 42nd anniversary with the company.

The years of employment have been a very enjoyable experience for Like. "It's a good company with very good benefits," she says. She went on to tell about the time she went to Detroit, Michigan (headquarters of Kresge at that time), to receive her diamond ring for 25 years of service. The company also presents employees with service pins every five years of service. Needless to say, Like has several of them.

Her long relationship with the company started in 1935 when Edgar Tyner, hired Like. "I ran him to death until I got a job," she laughs. Like was attending business college at the time and needed a job.

She left the company in 1937, was rehired in 1939 and quit again in 1941 when she moved to Columbus. In 1945, she returned to Portsmouth and was rehired. She worked on the floor until 1951, at which time she was moved to the office in the bookkeeping department.

In her many years, she has seen many changes take place. "There was always something new," she explains.

She remembered the candy counter, the fountain with stools, the office which was on the main floor and the merchandise of years past.

"We didn't have near the ready to wear as we have now. We didn't carry purses. We carry more toilet articles now; back then we had loose face powder, Ben Hur and Blue Waltz perfumes."

She continues, "We carried glassware, more lampshades, enamel wear, pots and pans and everything sold for less than a dollar."

A 1913 Kresge's Catalog lists such items as 14 count school crayons for five cents, a silk American flag at 10 cents, writing tablets five cents, porcelain door knobs 10 cents, enamel mixing pan five cents, bisque dolls 10 cents and the list goes on and on.

Although the local Kresge store opened in 1916, it all started when Sebastian Spering Kresge, set out to make his fortune. Kresge worked as a "drummer" - a tinware salesperson, and managed during the "panic of 1893" to save \$8,000 and invest in his own business. He started with a single Detroit store in 1899 and the rest is history.

Like recalls that Kresge made a visit to the local store. "He bought a hot dog for dinner and he was wearing golf knickers," she recalls.

The store has changed a lot through the years. When the store opened, it was divided in two sections. The south side was known as the five and 10 cent store, with the north side called the Dollar



Ruth Like and the crew from Kresge 150, Portsmouth, Ohio in 1937. Like is in the second row from the bottom, third person from the right.